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CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of influencing the actions of users of an interactive content-delivery system, comprising the steps of:  
    identifying probabilities of selection with respect to selections offered by said interactive content-delivery system; and  
    presenting users of said interactive content-delivery system with incentives based upon said analysis.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said identifying step includes at least the step of:  
    estimating probabilities of selection for each possible selection offered by said interactive content delivery system if historical user data for said interactive content delivery system is unavailable.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein said identifying step further comprises at least the step of analyzing historical user data for said interactive content delivery system to identify probability of selection based on said historical user data.

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4. The method of claim 3, wherein said step of analyzing historical user data comprises at least the step of performing historical analysis of paths taken by users who have not been presented with incentives.
5. The method of claim 3, wherein said step of analyzing historical user data is continually updated with new historical user data obtained after users of said interactive content-delivery system have been presented with incentives in accordance with the present invention.
6. The method of claim 3, wherein said incentives are selected based on gaming theory and include both positive and negative incentives.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein said interactive content-delivery system comprises a web-based e-commerce site.
8. A method of managing website visitors, comprising the steps of:  
receiving a content selection from a website user;  
analyzing said content selection and determining probabilities associated with the selection of a sub-choice presented to said user based on said content selection;

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presenting incentives associated with each sub-choice based upon said probabilities; and

repeating the above steps until a desired end choice has been selected.

9. A system for influencing the actions of users of an interactive content-delivery system, comprising:

means for identifying probabilities of selection with respect to selections offered by said interactive content-delivery system; and

means for presenting users of said interactive content-delivery system with incentives based upon said analysis.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein said means for identifying includes at least:

means for estimating probabilities of selection for each possible selection offered by said interactive content delivery system if historical user data for said interactive content delivery system is unavailable.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein said means for identifying further comprises at least means for analyzing historical user data for said interactive content delivery system to identify probability of selection based on said historical user data.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein said means for analyzing historical user data comprises at least means for performing historical analysis of paths taken by users who have not been presented with incentives.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein said means for analyzing historical user data is continually updated with new historical user data obtained after users of said interactive content-delivery system have been presented with incentives in accordance with the present invention.

14. The system of claim 11, wherein said incentives are selected based on gaming theory and include both positive and negative incentives.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said interactive content-delivery system comprises a web-based e-commerce site.

16. A computer program product for influencing the actions of users of an interactive content-delivery system, comprising a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code embodied in the medium, the computer-readable program code comprising:

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computer-readable program code that identifies probabilities of selection with respect to selections offered by said interactive content-delivery system; and

computer-readable program code that presents users of said interactive content-delivery system with incentives based upon said analysis.

17. The computer program product of claim 16, wherein said computer-readable program code that identifies probabilities of selection includes:

computer-readable program code that estimates probabilities of selection for each possible selection offered by said interactive content delivery system if historical user data for said interactive content delivery system is unavailable.

18. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein said computer-readable program code that identifies probabilities of selection further comprises computer-readable program code that analyzes historical user data for said interactive content delivery system to identify probability of selection based on said historical user data.

19. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein said computer-readable program code that analyzes historical user data comprises at least computer-

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readable program code that performs historical analysis of paths taken by users who have not been presented with incentives.

20. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein said computer-readable program code that analyzes historical user data is continually updated with new historical user data obtained after users of said interactive content-delivery system have been presented with incentives in accordance with the present invention.

21. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein said incentives are selected based on gaming theory and include both positive and negative incentives.

22. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein said interactive content-delivery system comprises a web-based e-commerce site.